

Safe Sleeping Practices

in early years education and care settings.

Safe sleeping practices in early childhood settings are an important component of daily practice.

Ensuring appropriate sleep routines and environments reduces the risk to young children and infants during sleep. It is vital that safe sleeping policies and procedures are reflective of the most current evidence research available at all times.

SIDS & Kids

SIDS & Kids is the recognised national authority on safe sleeping practices for infants and children. The website is www.sidsandkids.org. Please note that all following information is taken from the SIDS & Kids website and is current at time of posting (July 2011).

What is SIDS?

SIDS is short for 'Sudden Infant Death Syndrome' and used to be called 'cot death'. It means the sudden, unexpected death of a baby from no known cause. SIDS is the most common cause of death in babies between one month and one year of age.

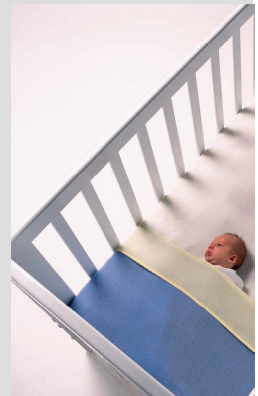
It is still not clear what causes SIDS. Some factors are thought to work together to reduce the risk of SIDS. Since the 'Reducing the Risk of SIDS' program was introduced in Australia in 1991, SIDS deaths have been significantly reduced.

Quality area two of the National Quality Standard focuses on safeguarding and promoting children's health and safety.

The standard expects that sleep and rest practices are consistent with contemporary views about children's health, safety and welfare and meet children's individual sleep needs. (Element 2.1.2) NQS.

How to sleep young children safely.

- Put baby on his/her back to sleep, from birth.
- Sleep baby with their face uncovered.
- Put baby's feet at the bottom of the cot.
- Tuck in the bedclothes securely so that bedding is not loose.
- Cigarette smoke increases the risk of SIDS.



Ensure the safety of equipment

Safe cot

Ensure it meets the Australian Standard for Cots (AS 2172). The guide 'Keeping Baby Safe: A guide to nursery furniture', provides further information and is available at:

www.consumer.gov.au/html/pdf/baby.pdf.

Safe mattress and safe bedding

- Ensure that the cot mattress is the right size for the cot.
- Ensure that it is firm and clean.
- Remove any of the pillows, quilts, doonas, duvets and lambskins from the cot.
- If you firmly wrap or swaddle the baby do not cover the baby's head.



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The Early Years Learning Framework identifies the importance of partnerships with families and respect for diversity in developing sleep practices. A considered approach to sleep promotes a sense of belonging and supports children's developing sense of wellbeing.

Sleep and family

Safe sleeping policy and procedures are based on best practice as outlined by the recognised national authority, service facilities and in partnership with families.

Partnerships with families and Respecting diversity are identified principles that underpin our practice as stated in the Early Years Learning Framework. They are important elements to promoting children's sense of Belonging, Being and Becoming.

Respect for diversity is explained on page 13 of the Early Years Learning Framework, as *'Children are born belonging to a culture, which is not only influenced by traditional practices, heritage and ancestral knowledge, but also by the experiences, values and beliefs of individual families and communities. Educators honour the histories, cultures, languages, traditions, child rearing practices and lifestyle choices of families. They respect differences in families' home lives.*

**For more
Information...**

www.sidsandkids.org

This statement can raise questions about how we manage sleep routines in early childhood settings while still maintaining *Respect for Diversity*.



Some questions for reflection.

Consider this example

- A family always holds their child while they go to sleep in a sling. When the baby falls asleep the baby remains loosely wrapped in the sling in sight of the family on the couch or on a bed. This has been an important part of their child rearing practice.
- What decisions can I make that will *'uphold all children's rights to have their cultures, identities, abilities and strengths acknowledged and valued (EYLF p. 13)'*?
- How do we respect differences in families home lives and follow policy and procedure that we know to be good practice?'

